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The Director of Central Intelligence

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National Intelligence Council

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25 May 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Stanley M. Moskowitz
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SUBJECT: Poland: Soviets Playing with Fire?

1. Moscow has reason to be satisfied with the situation in Poland:

- law and order has been restored;
- Although weakened, the Polish Communist Party is still functioning and its cadres are still involved in day to day decisionmaking. (Although in the factories its under nominal military control and oversight);
- Jaruzelski is trying to strengthen the Party and build politically safe trade unions;
- A semblance of normality has been achieved that has left Communist-rule in place, while pushing Poland off the front-burner of Soviet-Western relations.

But, Moscow also has reason to be dissatisfied:

- As May demonstrations indicate, broad-based opposition to Communist rule still very much alive; potential for blow-up is still strong;
- Party rank and file is still disillusioned and virtually leaderless. More important, Party leadership itself is infected with "liberal", anti-Soviet ideas;
- Party rebuilding is going very slowly, as is effort to form new unions (only about 20% of workers have joined);
- The Church is strong and getting stronger. Tangible evidence; hundreds of new Churches are being built.

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SECRETThe Pope's Visit

2. It seems highly likely that Moscow was consulted by Jaruzelski before an agreement was reached with the Vatican on the Pope's visit -- presumably including the decision to release Walesa from custody (done after Andropov took over). But it also seems clear that the Soviets are not at all comfortable with the Papal visit, especially since, from Moscow's perspective, very little has been done in Poland in the six months since the visit was arranged to get the country moving energetically in the direction of firm control and a safer socialist path. It may be that when the visit was arranged last winter - the downside risk seemed acceptable, given the seeming demoralization of the Polish people and the disarray of Solidarity. But now?

3. Nobody really knows, and, for Moscow, that's the problem. A Solidarity activist has told us that expectations are running high among the Polish people that the Pope's visit will usher in a "liberalization", and dialogue between the regime and society that will make life more bearable and ease fundamental tensions. Since Jaruzelski does not have the power (about the General's true inclination, Poles differ) to take liberalizing steps, according to the Solidarity activist a profound disillusionment among the people is inevitable. This will be highly dangerous. [redacted] takes a somewhat different tack; the Pope's visit will energize the Polish people, and strengthen their commitment to change and more freedom from the Party and from the USSR. The Pope's visit, in his view, may well be watershed, similar to the first one in 1979.

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4. The perspectives are different, but the bottom line is the same. The Papal visit is a seminal event; there are great unknowns; there is a real prospect for an enflamed political environment. Not during, but in the aftermath.

5. Under these circumstances, it would not be surprising if the USSR decided that a cancelled visit -- even at this late date -- would be safer than having it go forward. This might explain two highly unusual recent events:

- The attack in early May by the security police on a convent in Warsaw and the roughing-up of Catholic activists inside. Church property, heretofore, has been off-limits to the militia and the security services. The circumstances indicate that this was not a spontaneous action by security hotheads out of control.
- The beating to death the following day of the 19 year old son of a Catholic activist and poetess. This too looks intentional rather than accidental. This kind of brutality has not been a common phenomena.

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6. If these were provocations engineered by Moscow for the purpose of starting a reaction-counteraction chain that would make the Pope's visit an impossibility, it has not worked. The Church's reaction has been notably restrained; as if it recognized that the events were not necessarily the work of the regime. There have been no follow-up incidents.

7. But the signals from Moscow are still negative:

- The Soviet weekly New Times recently ran a highly critical article of deviations in a Polish (Party) journal.
- And, more seriously, the latest issue of the Soviet party's theoretical journal reprints a Polish article highly critical of the pace of political and ideological rectification in Poland. The main message: the situation is better than it was, but the momentum of events is not going in the right direction.

8. This does not add up to a concerted Soviet campaign of pressure on Jaruzelski. But it is evidence that the Soviets are more anxious about Poland, and particularly the Pope's visit. And it is possible that the Soviets see the Polish scene more darkly than we think they do (or should). There are even rumors in Poland that Moscow will activate its allies on the Politburo to replace Jaruzelski as party secretary at the 31 May party Plenum -- presumably in favor of hardliner Stefan Olzowski. The odds are strongly against it, but it would not be the USSR's first Polish miscalculation.

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